

Additional Questions

Obesity: A Public Health Approach
October 19, 2017 Grand Rounds Presentation

Question: I've recently seen a big increase in the number of convenience stores within walkable proximity of community residents. However, it seems that most convenience stores are largely stocking unhealthy foods. Do you know of any research on the subject?

Answer: Yes, there is good research that shows that convenience stores stock less healthy food so while people may walk more to get to them they end up eating worse. Philadelphia has been doing a healthy corner store initiative to try to change this <http://thefoodtrust.org/what-we-do/corner-store>

Question: Does research indicate higher levels of fitness among people who exercise in groups compared to those who exercise alone?

Answer: There is not really good data on this at a population level. Having an exercise "buddy" does help people to be more active more often and is a recommended strategy. Groups like Cross Fit are pushing people to a higher fitness level but there are plenty of people who get fit on their own.

Question: What are the fitness trends in Australia? Are they too seeing increases in obesity? If not, what are the protective factors?

Answer: 63% of Australian adults are overweight or obese so they look a lot like us.

Question: I don't think we realize the negative effects of artificial sweeteners. Maybe we should start labeling sweeteners with black box warning, similar to tobacco products. What do you think? How do issues, such as artificial sweeteners get elevated to be recognized as a public health problem?

Answer: There is really not conclusive science on the safety/lack of safety of artificial sweeteners. I would recommend eating real foods but we need clearer science before a public health recommendation can be made.

Question: As you noted, there has been amazing urban sprawl in Texas over the past 20 years. Our public transportation never seems to keep up. What are some practices used by other states to catch up to where the population is moving?

Answer: One that I like is Bus Rapid Transit. This is used widely in Brazil. The idea is bus only lanes with terminals where you pre-pay prior to boarding the bus. These are relatively cheap alternatives to public transit and can change with changing demographics much faster than light rail.